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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

THE EVOLUTION OF REVOLUTION. By H. M. Hyndman. New York: Boni & Liveright.

When social evolution reaches certain critical points, then we have what is called revolution—a process not essentially different from that which preceded it, though, in appearance, something new. Force is not essential to revolution, and it is absurd to speak of “making a revolution” by force. Revolutions may well be peaceful, and in fact the greatest revolution of all time, the change in the prehistoric period from primitive communism to the system of individual property and exchange, was accomplished, so far as we know, without bloodshed and indeed without clear consciousness of what was going on. Social development is largely, though not wholly determined by economic causes, and being at once necessary and to a large extent unconscious, it partakes of the ruthlessness of the forces of nature. To be sure, some of the great movements have been “voluntary” and psychological. By no manner of logical juggling can the rise of the Arabs through the impulse of Mohammedanism, or those great adventures of the Christian peoples, the Crusades, be explained in accordance with a strict historic determinism. But the motives of these movements had no very close relation to any true social aims. The inference is that conscious social evolution or peaceful revolution is quite possible, and that people ought to prepare for making the great change which is to come in the not distant future, a conscious and a peaceful change.

Such in substance are Mr. Hyndman's general views about evolution and revolution. They do not differ greatly from the views held by most students of social development. The difference between Mr. Hyndman and the non-socialistic thinkers is mostly one of emphasis and of implication. It is the emphasis upon the happiness of the primeval communistic way of life in contrast with the misery that flowed from the change to individualism, and it is the implication that communism is a form of life essentially congenial to human nature and favorable to its development, that characterize Mr. Hyndman's treatise. The moderation—one might almost say the non-revolutionary—character of this treatise—makes it acceptable to mildly conservative and mildly radical readers alike. The book is also, in a measure, eye-opening. But there are two causes which somewhat interfere with its success. One of these is the difficulty of making socialist criticism work into socialist constructive theory, and the other is the difficulty of making history into anything theoretic anyhow.

Mr. Hyndman's description of primitive communal life is interesting and

suggestive. Without concealing the horrors, the moral crudities, of that phase of human existence, the author succeeds in impressing one with the idea that there are worse things than cannibalism and uncivilized sex customs. These things simply corresponded to a relatively low grade of mental and moral development; they were moral in their time. The true horror came in with slavery, that early form of property; for slavery was an anomaly at the stage of moral and mental development in which it prevailed. It was a brake upon human development, and it had its origin in filthy lucre.

But there is a gap between this exposition and what follows. In fact, there are two gaps. One is a break in the author's historic method, or rather in the success of that method as applied to subsequent periods. The treatise gradually turns into a narrative of successive revolutions, diminishing in value and becoming more and more detailed, more and more merely chronological as the author approaches modern times. From the description of Greek and Roman slave civilization down through the chaos of the dark ages, the rise of feudalism, the medieval peasant revolts, to the Fabian Society, there is a decline in interest and in fruitfulness of comment. We set out with something large and almost grand in conception; we arrive at some observations concerning the Second International. The other gap is a logical chasm. "Communism, in any shape," says the author, "is so far from being contrary to human nature that human beings have lived well and happily under its dispensations for countless centuries. It solved beforehand on a low plane many of the problems which are exercising the greatest minds of civilized countries to-day." The implication plainly is that human beings upon a higher plane may live well and happily under the dispensations of a new communism. Perhaps so! But is not Mr. Hyndman falling into that very error of which anti-Socialists are frequently accused—the fallacy of assuming that human nature is always the same? To argue from primitive human beings to modern human beings seems not much more cogent than to base conclusions regarding human society upon the life of the bees. To put the case in another way, there must have been in primitive human nature the germ of individualism as well as the germ of communism. The latter developed first, because conditions required this earlier development; it came before capitalism, just as cannibalism came before pork-eating. From these facts there is no argument either way. The historic survey leaves us with the simple facts, that there is nothing in the very constitution of human nature which makes communism impossible, and that amid strictly primitive conditions this social order was both necessary and beneficial.

This is all—but it is a good deal. In fact, Mr. Hyndman's whole book, though confused or only half successful in its method, may prove enlightening. It has perspective, if not penetration; and it is particularly good against that conservative or "Tory" frame of mind which is characterized not so much by attachment to the past as by an unimaginative conception of the past in terms of the present. One does not believe that Mr. Hyndman and his school

possess the secret of social evolution; but one cannot help feeling that this book is in a measure prophetic. To consider the present as part of a series of changes that stretches back into the remote past is, inevitably, to shake off some prepossessions. This Mr. Hyndman helps one to do.

MR. DIMOCK: A Story of To-Day. By Mrs. Denis O'Sullivan. New York: John Lane Company.

If Mrs. O'Sullivan has not quite succeeded in writing an absorbing story, she has produced something much rarer and better—a genuine reflection of life and character, a narrative that may be called, without further abuse of a much-abused term, a novel.

And a very winsome novel it is, too. It is easy to find fault with it just in proportion as the critic chooses to take high or technical ground. There is, one might say, far too much dispersion of interest throughout the story; one is attracted by everything, held by nothing. Where is the unity of the narrative? We do not find here anything that looks like an inevitable sequence of events; the people of the story are in fact a little arbitrary, a little unaccountable in their reactions, and the currents of thought and feeling that come into individual lives from the great world do not appear to flow in any particular direction. There is no strong central figure. Mr. Dimock himself may be intended for one; but Mr. Dimock is an obvious egoist, a mild profiteer, an elderly Don Juan; it must be confessed that before one is half-way through the story one loses interest in his psychosis and ceases to care what becomes of him—the tolerant Lady Freke may marry him if she chooses, or he may go back to America and legitimatize his relations with his stenographer. As a picture, the story possesses unity, but it is the unity of the author's own temperament and social experience.

The novel has, indeed, a very special characteristic which, while it increases its charm, contributes to the effect of dispersion just noted. It has its setting in a little world of its own, a group, a family; and yet it is by no means a study of, or even a story *about*, such a world, group, or circle. This characteristic is, if one may be permitted the impertinence, distinctly Irish—as it is intensely human. Old friends, a good deal related, much interlinked in their affections and in their love affairs, the people of the story are all desperately individual and yet almost clannish in their sympathies. New friends also are drawn into the circle, treated with sympathy, loved, idolized, and lost. Lady Freke is passionately maternal toward two handsome, high-minded Serbian officers. One can never be sure whether or not they are as dear to her as her own sons, or whether or not their country is as dear to her as Ireland itself. She invents, and believes in, the myth that Serbia and Ireland are alike. She sees in the two Serbians the highest type of manhood, and yet she never admits that her two American sons are not the highest type of manhood. With a kind of